

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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R 261309Z MAR 75

FM AMCONSUL BELFAST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 869

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

USNAVCOMMSTA LONDONDERRY

UNCLAS BELFAST 101

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER SPENDS BUSY DAY IN ULSTER

REF: BELFAST 95

1. PRIME MINISTER HAROLD WILSON SPENT BUSY SIX HOURS
IN BELFAST MARCH 25. HE VISITED ARMY BARRACKS, MET AND
LUNCHED WITH LOCAL POLITICAL LEADERS, MET LEADERS OF THE
FOUR LARGE CHURCHES IN PROVINCE AND MADE SEVEN-MINUTE
VIDEO TAPE ANNOUNCING ELECTION FOR CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION
(TEXT FOLLOWS) WOULD BE HELD MAY 1.

2. THERE FAVORABLE REACTIONS TO VISIT AND TO TAPE
REMARKS BY MOST LOYALIST POLITICIANS AND BY SOCIAL
DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP). VANGUARD UNIONISTS
AND DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS DID NOT RPT NOT MEET WITH P.M.
REVEREND IAN PAISLEY REFUSED INVITATION TO LUNCH SAYING
VISIT WAS POLITICAL DEVICE TO DRAW ATTENTION FROM PRIME
MINISTER'S DIFFICULTIES WITHIN LABOUR PARTY OVER STAND ON
EEC REFERENDUM. PAISLEY RECALLED "INSULT TO ULSTER
PEOPLE BEING CALLED SPONGERS" AND STATED WILSON HAD
CONSISTENTLY REFUSED MEET WITH UNIONISTS AT WESTMINSTER.
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HARRY WEST LEADER OF OFFICIAL UNIONISTS WHICH ALONG WITH

VANGUARD AND DEMOCRATIC UNIONISTS IS LEG OF TRIPOLI UNITED
ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) SPOKE PRIVATELY AND LUNCHEON
WITH P.M. AND PRONOUNCED HIMSELF PLEASED BY EVENTS DAY.

3. IN TAPED ADDRESS ANNOUNCING DATE FOR ELECTION. PRIME
MINISTER SEEMED CHEERFUL AND OPTIMISTIC ABOUT PROSPECTS
CONVENTION SUCCESS. HE DID NOT RPT NOT MENTION IRISH
DIMENSION OR POWER SHARING NOR DID HE MAKE ANY
THREAT VEILED OR OTHERWISE ABOUT BRITISH REACTION SHOULD
CONVENTION FAIL. HE EMPHASIZED THAT IN CONTRAST TO PREVIOUS
SOLUTIONS PROPOSED, CONVENTION WOULD BE PURELY ULSTER
UNDERTAKING AND GOVERNMENT AND PARLIAMENT WILL "PAY VERY
CLOSE HEED TO THE VOICES OF REASON AND CONCILIATION EXPRESSED
THROUGH THE CONVENTION." P.M. EXCLUDED POSSIBILITY
PARLIAMENTARY RATIFICATION OF ULSTER CONSTITUTION THAT "NOT
BALANCED AND FAIR TO ALL THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND"
AND DENIED ANY VIEW THAT BRITISH GOVERNMENT COULD COERCE
PEOPLE NORTHERN IRELAND INTO A UNITED IRELAND AGAINST THEIR
WILL.

4. PAISLEY, WEST AND DEPUTY VANGUARD LEADER OPENED
ELECTION CAMPAIGN FOR UNIONISTS AS DID FITT FOR SDLP.
UUUC STATEDLY WILL NOT RPT NOT PERMIT EMERGENCE OF
"ILLEGITIMATE" GOVERNMENT IN WHICH POWER IS SHARED IN
EXECUTIVE WITH THOSE WOULD DESTROY BOTH CONSTITUTION AND
LINK WITH UNITED KINGDOM. WEST SAID P.M. HAD TOLD HIM
OMISSION ANY REFERENCE TO POWER SHARING IN SPEECH QUITE
DELIBERATE. FITT APPEALED TO ELECTORATE FOR REASON, SANITY
AND MODERATION. MODERATES IN ALLIANCE. NORTHERN IRELAND
LABOUR PARTY, UNIONIST PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND WELCOMED
ANNOUNCEMENT OF EARLY ELECTION AND PRAISED TONE PRIME MINISTER'S
ADDRESS.

5. IN WHAT MUST BE DISAPPOINTMENT TO SECSTATE REES AND AT
LEAST SOME NORTHERN MEMBERS, PROVISIONAL SINK FEIN
ANNOUNCED MARCH 25 IT WOULD NOT RPT NOT CONTEST ELECTION.
DUBLIN ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECISION STRESSED IRRELEVANCY OF
SIX COUNTY CONVENTION AND CONTINUED DOMINATION BRITISH.
MAIRE DRUMM PROVISIONAL SINK FEIN VP IN NORTH APPARENTLY
UNAWARE SUBSTANCE DUBLIN STATEMENT SAID MARCH 25 REASON FOR
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ABSTENTION WAS CONTINUED DETENTION OF MORE THAN FOUR HUNDRED
POTENTIAL CANDIDATES AND PARTY WORKERS. ULSTER VOLUNTEER
FORCE WILL ALSO ABSTAIN. REPUBLICAN CLUBS (OFFICIAL SINK
FEIN IN NORTH) WILL FIELD AT LEAST NINE CANDIDATES.

6. COMMENT: GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT OF BUILDUP TO
CAMPAIGN CULMINATING IN PERSONAL VISIT AND ANNOUNCEMENT
DATE BY PRIME MINISTER STILL GOING WELL (REFTEL).

WHILE SDLP CAN FIND GROUNDS CONCERN OVER OMISSION POWER SHARING ELEMENT IN SPEECH, LOYALIST SUSPICIONS OF P.M. AND LABOUR PARTY POLICY SHOULD BE FURTHER ALLAYED. GOVERNMENT IN FORESWEARING IMPOSED FORMULA IS CONSISTENT IN REMINDING PEOPLE OF ULSTER THAT SOLUTION IS UP TO THEM. IMPONDERABLES REMAIN BUT IF CEASEFIRE CONTINUES AND CONSEQUENTLY IF MODERATION CAN CONTINUE TO DILUTE TRADITIONAL TRIBAL LOYALTIES TO RIGID NEGATIVISM THERE IS STILL AT LEAST A HOPE OF PROGRESS IN THE CONVENTION TOWARD POLITICAL CONCILIATION OF THE ULSTER COMMUNITIES.

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